

or supersede any State or territory's authority to regulate wildlife within its borders.

I urge my colleagues to support this non-controversial legislation to ensure that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is able to clamp down on the illegal trade in big cats. Only two weeks ago the Los Angeles Times reported that a wildlife caretaker at the Shambala Preserve in California had been attacked and severely injured by a 4-year old captive tiger. This tragic event should serve to remind all of us that even under expert care, large predatory cats remain a significant threat to public safety that can, and should, be tightly controlled.

HONORING THE MOUNT MADONNA SCHOOL GIRLS VOLLEYBALL TEAM

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 3, 2008

Mr. FARR. Madam Speaker, I rise today along with my colleague and good friend Congressman MIKE HONDA in order to congratulate the members and coaches of the Mount Madonna girls volleyball team on their extraordinary run to become the 2007 California Interscholastic Federation, CIF, Division V Champions. In 3 years, the Mount Madonna Hawks went from being a team ranked non-competitive by their own athletic league to state champions.

In a school of only fifty students with only thirteen of those being junior and senior girls, eleven girls made the seemingly impossible a reality. On December 1, 2007 the Mount Madonna Hawks defeated an opponent from a school seven times their size to win the 2007 CIF Division V State Championship.

Along the way the Hawks also picked up the titles of the Santa Cruz Coast Athletic League Co-Champions, the CIF Central Coast Section Division V Champions, and the CIF Northern California Division V Champions. They accomplished this while also earning the CIF Central Coast Section award for best collective grade point average for an all varsity team.

Team leaders Hannah Meade, Alexa Rosendale and Erin Mitchell were each recognized individually by local and State organizations for their inspired and passionate play. However, we all know that it is the entire team of Ashley England, Camille Schwartz, Joanna Koda, Rachel Sunberg, Shelby Bofula, Soma Sharen, Tessa Fischer and Zoe Bostick that made this possible. I am so proud of their accomplishment and urge them to cherish this moment and use it as inspiration to overcome adversity in the years ahead.

I have long admired the students and teachers at the Mount Madonna School and second year Coach Gabrielle Houston Neville, more affectionately known as Gabby, and Athletic Director Sidd McDonald. They are testaments to the dedicated and exceptional staff that nurtures these future leaders.

When people ask about the young women of the 2007 Mount Madonna girls volleyball team, let it be said that throughout the season they showed the character, determination, sportsmanship, and mental and physical resilience of true champions. To the team I say, congratulations on your title as 2007 Division

V State Champions, young Hawks; may this mark the beginning of future successes.

LUKE J. GILBERT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 3, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Luke J. Gilbert, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 865 and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Luke has been very active with his troop, participating in many Scout activities. Over the many years Luke has been involved with Scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Luke J. Gilbert for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

INTRODUCTION OF A BILL TO IMPROVE THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 3, 2008

Ms. BORDALLO. Madam Speaker, today I introduced a bill to amend section 8903 of title 5 of the United States Code to authorize the Office of Personnel Management, OPM, to approve companies who offer non-Governmentwide service benefit health care plans to participate in the Federal Employees Health Benefits, FEHB, Program. Current U.S. law and its supporting regulations restrict companies that offer non-Governmentwide service benefit health care plans from participating in the FEHB Program. Current law authorizes annual approval of only a service benefit health care plan for the FEHB Program that is not otherwise considered an employee organization plan and further requires that plan to be offered Governmentwide.

Enactment of the bill I introduced today would allow for local or regional companies offering at least one level of service benefit coverage to participate in the FEHB Program. This additional participation would lead to a greater degree of choice for Federal employees regarding health care plans available to them and their families. Additional participation in and increased choices among the FEHB Program could lower costs for beneficiaries and result in greater quality of coverage. Enactment of the bill could also provide Federal employees residing in rural, underserved, or remote locations needed flexibility toward meeting their and their families' health care needs. I know that in my district greater choice and flexibility with respect to health care plans would improve the quality of life for Federal employees and their families, but it also would go far toward lowering costs of health care coverage for those individuals.

Specifically, the bill I introduced today would amend section 8903 of title 5 of the United States Code to authorize OPM to contract for and approve applications for service benefit plan carriers that offer non-Governmentwide service benefit health care plans. The bill would accomplish this objective by inserting a new paragraph five under section 8903 authorizing one or more fee-for-service plans other than a Governmentwide plan or an employee organization plan eligible for selection through the FEHB Program. The bill also proposes to codify a definition of the term "State" in the same provision of law, for the purpose of ensuring companies offering service benefit plans otherwise available to individuals residing in any of the several States, the District of Columbia, Guam, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, CNMI, have equal access to participate in the FEHB Program, in so far as they satisfy other requirements for participation established by law and regulation. The bill would further make certain technical and conforming amendments to current law to support its overall and underlying intent.

On June 1, 2007, the Director of OPM transmitted to Congress a legislative proposal entitled "Federal Employees Health Benefits Improvements Act of 2007." Similar to the bill I introduced today, the administration's proposal would, in part, authorize OPM to contract with companies offering additional types of health benefit plans for participation in the FEHB Program.

I support competition in the health insurance marketplace with the intent of lowering costs, increasing choice for consumers, and improving quality of care. I also support strengthening the FEHB Program and increasing the number and quality of plans made available to Federal employees residing in my district and across the country. I look forward to working with the leaders of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and its Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia on the bill I introduced today and as they consider changes in law governing the administration of the FEHB Program.

GAGE CARTER HERRINGTON

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 3, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Gage Carter Herrington, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America Troop 45 and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Gage has been very active with his troop, participating in many Scout activities. Over the many years Gage has been involved with Scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Gage Carter Herrington for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.